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**When Is War Over?**  
**Women's stories of healing and rebuilding after the war in El Salvador**

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On January 16, 1992, the government of El Salvador and the left-wing *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) signed Peace Accords to end twelve years of civil war. Women have made significant contributions to post-war reconstruction and healing of war-related violations and trauma. This article discusses some of their challenges and accomplishments, emphasizing the lengthy, multi-layered processes involved in de-militarization, as suggested by the title question: When is war over?

Examining the historical circumstances that led to this war raises a second question: When did the war start? According to Conaway and Martínez (2004), the civil war in El Salvador was “the culmination of decades of economic marginalization, social segregation, political repression, failed land reform, and military control of the country” (p. 11). A few aristocratic families controlled most of the nation’s wealth and the majority of people were desperately poor. This situation had roots in 300 years of colonization by Spain, followed by 200 years of U.S. political, economic, and military interventions. For decades, peasants and workers organized to change the gross inequalities that characterized the country. Their efforts met severe government repression including assassinations of community leaders and armed attacks on protestors. In the 1970s, as government repression worsened, revolutionary organizations formed in rural and urban areas (Binford 2004; Wood 2004).

The government-backed assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in March 1980 and the massacre of funeral attendees provided the impetus for five revolutionary groups to join forces as the Democratic Revolution Front (FDR) with the FMLN as its military wing. The FMLN organized its first attack six months after Romero's assassination, and was supported by many non-combatants—peasants, workers, students, and faith-based communities. Government troops terrorized and massacred people in many communities suspected of harboring FMLN forces, especially in mountainous areas in the east and north of the country: Chalatenango, San Vicente, Suchitoto, and Morazán. Government forces pursued a scorched earth policy and destroyed forest cover, food supplies, and shelter through ground attacks, firing from helicopters, and carpet bombing (Murray 1997; Thompson and Eade 2004). In a country of six million, an estimated 80,000 people were killed and 7,000 more “disappeared” (Ready, Stephen and Cosgrove 2001, 184). Many were forced to abandon their homes and sources of livelihood. It was too dangerous to plant or tend crops; people could not care for their livestock or maintain their orchards. Half a million people were displaced internally; one million fled the country to refugee camps in Honduras, or to the United States (Conaway and Martínez 2004, 2).

Napalm, white phosphorus, and “daisy cutter” bombs scarred people and the land, “some bombs leaving craters fifteen feet deep and as wide as a football field” (Whelan 1988, 35). The war exacerbated environmental destruction caused by decades of plantation agriculture that included deforestation, reduced soil fertility, and the use of hazardous pesticides, DDT among them (Faber 1993; Weinberg 1991).

## **Impacts of the war on women**

Women— especially young women—participated as FMLN combatants, making up an estimated 30 percent of the fighting force at the height of the war (Conaway and Martínez 2004, 2; Kampwirth 2002). Women were also *colaboradoras* who sustained communities and camps in FMLN-controlled zones, and *tenedoras*—supporters who lived in areas controlled by the FMLN.

Women were profoundly affected by the war as those responsible for generating household income, caring for children, and finding medical help, food, and shelter for their families. During the war, up to 51 percent of households were headed by women (Ready, Stephen and Cosgrove 2001, 184-85). Reflecting on her experience, Cruz Rivas de Valladares, a member of La Florida Permaculture Community (La Libertad) said:

We experienced the cruelty of the war. We stumbled over corpses. We were in the middle of gunfire, also fire from rockets and planes. I was pregnant when I had to flee. I went to a camp in Honduras and had the baby there. I managed to come back and I looked for my husband who was with the guerillas. I lived in a refugee camp in San Salvador run by the Catholic Church. My husband is here now. For three years we had to live separately. I was responsible for our two daughters.<sup>1</sup>

Some women had to leave their children in the care of others or send them abroad for safety. Thousands of women were killed. Many thousands lost family members, and suffered rape, abuse, and torture by government forces and death squads (Kampwirth 2002; Lorentzen 1998). A significant number of elderly people, especially women whose husbands and children were killed or who fled, were left without family support. Severe family disruption included high numbers of woman-headed households (29 percent) after the war (Conaway and Martínez 2004, 18).

Life in the refugee camps was hard, but some learned new skills and perspectives (MacDonald and Gatehouse 1994; McElhinny 2004; Thompson and Eade 2004). Miriam Chicas, who grew up in Perquín (Morazán), commented:

I was given work in health and they put my husband, Oscar, in charge of food distribution. Since this was our first experience of collective work, we were hesitant, but we adapted quickly ....

When we came back to Perquín eight months later we had a very different vision. We began to work in community organizations. Oscar became a member of the community council and I started to work through the church. We women hadn't been very active outside of our homes, but we began to sense the need to do something (quoted in Murray 1997, 16).

However, Norma Stoltz Chinchilla (1997) identified “key ideological and cultural barriers” within armed revolutionary movements, including the FMLN, that limited women achieving greater equality:

- the lack of a gendered analysis of the revolutionary movement and the society it wanted to change, with a singular emphasis on class exploitation;
- the role of masculinist culture in the supposedly “genderless” vanguard party;
- the principle of self-sacrifice and obedience to authority; and
- a weak understanding of the importance of democracy and the role of civil society in the creation of a new society. (Chinchilla 1997, 209-10)

### **The 1992 Peace Accords**

Military stalemate brought the government and the FMLN to negotiate a peace settlement, with the support of U.N. Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar. This involved a series of negotiations and interim agreements over a two-year period that culminated in the signing of the Peace Accords at Chapultepec (Mexico) in January 1992 (Murray 1997, 21-23). The United Nations Observer Mission to El Salvador (ONUSAL) oversaw the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program, and verified and monitored human rights violations committed during the war. The Peace Accords provided for downsizing of the military, de-militarization of the police force, legalization of the

FMLN as a political party, commitment to the rule of law, and plans for reconstruction (Studemeister 2001).

Under the Land Transfer Program (*Programa de Transferencia de Tierras* –PTT) ex-combatants on both sides could claim land for resettlement, as well as some non-combatants who had been affected by the conflict. About 22 percent of rural households received land under the PTT, a process fraught with delays, administrative problems, and discrimination against women—especially in the early stages (Reed 2005, 6). Ultimately, 35 percent of PTT beneficiaries were women, up from 11 percent during the land distribution program started in the 1980s, largely as a counter-insurgency measure (Gómez et al. 2002, 22). People struggled hard for these small plots but much of this land was not suitable for subsistence farming. Moreover, most recipients needed more technical training and financial assistance to be successful farmers. Some soon gave up farming, and joined the ranks of overseas workers who send home monthly remittances, as discussed below.

Neoliberal economic imperatives mean that post-war peace agreements typically focus on getting business running again, and do not address root causes of conflict or make provision for meaningful reconciliation or reparations (Lipschutz 1998). This was also the case in El Salvador where the conservative Nationalist Republican Alliance party (ARENA), elected in 1989, sought to stimulate the post-war economy by opening new export markets and encouraging foreign investment. It implemented structural adjustment policies including the privatization of banks and some public services. Macroeconomic policy favored the financial sector and the *maquila* factories surrounding San Salvador,

rather than addressing the needs of communities trying to recover from the war, or the thousand of dispossessed people who attempt to survive in the informal economy.

Women from both the FMLN and the government participated in all phases of the negotiations. Ana Guadalupe Martinez, a high-ranking FMLN official, noted that her involvement was “not as a woman, but as the representative of a powerful armed group” (quoted in Conaway and Martínez 2004, 13). These authors report that, with hindsight, “many female FMLN fighters regret their lack of gender awareness during the peace process” (2004, 3). Nevertheless, they underline the importance of women’s presence in the negotiations, which led to the inclusion of “*tenedores*—non-combatant FMLN supporters, and internally displaced people in conflict-affected areas” (p.2), as beneficiaries of reintegration packages, including people like Cruz Rivas de Valladares, quoted earlier. This inclusion of non-combatant women was highly unusual; peace agreements generally focus only on combatants, who, typically, are men.

The return to domestic life after the war was a difficult transition for some women combatants who were expected to return to traditional domestic roles, to support their husbands, brothers and sons, and to help them re-settle and gain recognition for their part in the war (Chinchilla 1997; Kampwirth 2002). Women combatants were not always respected for the part they played in the war, nor recognized for their new skills or capable leadership.

### **Healing and rebuilding in the aftermath of war**

A growing literature has established the complex nature of the inter-related psychological, economic, political, legal, and spiritual processes involved in healing and rebuilding after the upheavals, atrocities, and trauma of war (e.g. Barsalou 2005; Cane

2002; Fletcher and Weinstein 2002; Simonovic 2004; Stover and Weinstein 2004). At the micro level, healing and rebuilding includes personal healing from physical and emotional wounds; re-establishing trust in others; searching for the truth of what happened and witnessing other people's testimony. It means using personal and family resources—skills, time, money, care, persistence, and imagination—to create new homes and livelihoods. At the community/meso level, it includes repairing damaged buildings, revitalizing land, planting trees, enhancing water systems, providing health-care, and fostering community renewal through art, music, video, or radio shows. It involves creating public memorials to heroes and martyrs, and visioning new ways of living. At the institutional/macro level, healing and rebuilding means upholding the rule of law and international human rights standards; holding governments accountable for commitments contained in peace agreements; supporting candidates for local and national office who will facilitate healing and rebuilding from war, including the adoption of national budget priorities that support sustainable development.

### *Memory, History and Truth Telling*

ONUSAL set up a Truth Commission that heard testimony of war crimes and human rights abuses (Lagström 2005). The Truth Commission report condemned FMLN violence but estimated that government forces and death squads committed 85 percent of violent deaths (U.N. Security Council 1993, 43). The Commission admonished the government to set up a legal process to deal with those who had committed war crimes, including high-ranking government and military officials. Instead, the government pushed an amnesty law through the Legislative Assembly on March 20, 1993, five days after the Truth Commission report was published (Rubin 2004; Whitfield 2001). This law

shielded war criminals from possible legal action, and successive presidents have refused to re-open this issue. Survivors, witnesses, journalists, and historians have pieced together information, establishing the truth of what happened at specific locations by listening to personal testimonies, exhuming gravesites, and detailing lists of people killed or missing (see e.g. Danner 1994). Many people are calling for the repeal of the amnesty, “seen by activists and United Nations experts as the biggest hurdle to achieving respect for human rights” in El Salvador (Gutierrez 2007a).

Another ONUSAL recommendation was that the government set up a national memorial to those who were “disappeared” or killed by state forces as a form of “moral reparations”, but the government ignored this (Amnesty International 2003). Instead, a coalition of NGOs sponsored the construction of the *Monument a la Memoria y La Verdad* (Monument to Memory and Truth) in Cuscatlán Park, San Salvador, and dedicated in 2003. This long wall of black granite is inscribed with the names of over 25,000 children, women, and men, with the text: "A space for hope, to continue to dream and to build a society that is more just, humane and equitable". Many small towns in former war zones commissioned artists to paint murals and create memorials to honor those who were killed. The School of Art, established in 2005 by Claudia Bernardi and others in Perquín (Morazán), has sponsored murals.<sup>2</sup> Also, through the school, young people interviewed their elders to learn about community history before, during, and after the war.<sup>3</sup> The practice of commemorating violent deaths, like the assassination of Archbishop Romero on March 24, 1980, provides another continuing forum for mourning, remembrance, and experience of community and solidarity

*Healing Self, Family and Community*

During the war, many people lived in constant fear and anxiety. In the aftermath, women cared for traumatized family members, some of whom had sustained disabling injuries. This included people who had been arrested and tortured, and those who witnessed or committed acts of violence. At the community level, women sought to console others who lost relatives through detention or combat. They cared for children who had experienced the horrors of war, sometimes the violent death of their parents. Community organizations, church groups, and feminist projects have provided a range of psychological, spiritual, and practical help. Staff of the Capacitar Wellness Center (Suchitoto), for example, teach holistic healing practices to community members, including body work, Tai chi, and ritual. They work with families affected by the war, domestic violence, and daily violence in the streets (Cane 2002).<sup>4</sup>

Women challenged police and military officials, as they searched for relatives “disappeared” by government forces, estimated at 7,000 people. COMADRES (Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated Persons of El Salvador), formed in 1977, mainly comprised poor women whose husbands or children had been kidnapped or killed by death squads and government troops.<sup>5</sup> Over the years, this organization developed from a group of concerned relatives to a broader political movement committed to human rights (Bejarano 2002; Schirmer 1993). In 1983, the Marianella Garcia Villas Committee of Relatives of Victims of Human Rights Violations (CODEFAM) took up this issue also. Guadalupe Mejía Delgado, director of this organization, went to barracks and prisons, and is credited with rescuing over 1,500 people from arbitrary detention. Along with members of COMADRES, she continues to accuse the state “of hiding behind the veil of

an amnesty law to avoid answering the question that the families of the missing ones always ask: Where are they?" (1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005, 554).

Government forces abducted infants and young children from families living in the war zones. Some of these children were raised in orphanages or by military families in El Salvador; hundreds of others were adopted in North America and Europe. The *Asociación Pro-Búsqueda de Niñas y Niños Desaparecidos* (Organization for Disappeared Children) has worked closely with the University of California Human Rights Center (Berkeley) to locate such children who are now young adults.<sup>6</sup> These organizations help to reunite families and seek to hold the government accountable for this wartime policy. Years later, when pressed by community organizers to apologize to families for abducting young children, a government official would say only "Sorry the children were misplaced."<sup>7</sup>

#### *Rebuilding: Sustainable Communities*

Displaced people demanded the right to return to their towns and villages while the war still raged, a courageous and defiant step that began to restrict the scope of military incursions (MacDonald and Gatehouse 1994; McElhinney 2004; Wood 2004). Others moved onto unoccupied land. Community members and NGOs took the lead in much post-war reconstruction at local level, sometimes with help from solidarity organizations outside El Salvador.<sup>8</sup> The Christian Committee of the Displaced (CRIPDES), with young single women in leadership roles, helped organize people to return to their homes (Thompson and Eade 2004). At national level, support from international organizations was integral to the reconstruction process. This included U.N. agencies, donor governments (e.g. Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States), and

international organizations ranging from the World Bank to Oxfam, which provided resources on a short-term basis.

Legacies of the war have included political polarization between the ARENA-controlled government and people in areas that supported the FMLN. In conversation, Rosa Cándida, mayor of Las Vueltas (Chalatenango), said that because her town is an FMLN stronghold, government support had been weak. Their challenge is to continue to rebuild despite limited resources.

We have a small fund from central government, which we prioritize according to the greatest needs. This year we are improving the clinic and the school. We want to have a high school here. For the clinic we are getting some help from an international NGO. We need funds for roads and infrastructure. Part of the budget this year will go towards these costs. We also have a water project to improve the water system. We want a better solid waste treatment facility. We have a center for children with disabilities but need to expand it. The high school and solid waste are priorities but we don't have all the resources yet, so we are doing it bit by bit....<sup>9</sup>

María Esperanza Ortega, a member of the Association of War Victims of El Salvador and a founding member of the Coordination of Communities and Repopulation (CCR)<sup>10</sup> described the impetus for starting this organization based in Chalatenango:

From 1980-84 people had to leave their homes... even pregnant women and children had to leave this region. If you live far from your home place it's very difficult. People wanted to return. We demanded to be protected when we returned to our land. We saw it necessary to organize ourselves to carry out our struggle. I was one of the founders of the first Board of CCR on June 19, 1988 at the National University in San Salvador. This is how the dialogue and negotiation regarding the Peace Accords started. After the signing of the Peace Accords we started to work on development and formed women's groups, groups for healthcare, youth affairs, education, and so on.<sup>11</sup>

CCR began working in 5 communities and now works with 100. It created the Foundation for the Cooperation and Community Development of El Salvador (CORDES), a major NGO, which provides technical support for small-scale farming,

coffee production, and home gardens. CORDES supports coffee farmers (men) who have formed processing coops for roasting (mainly done by women). Their roasted coffee brings a good price on the local market (\$2.25 per pound). A goal is to have their plots certified as organic and to sell to fair-trade buyers in North America at higher prices.

CCR also teaches people about health care, first aid, and physical therapy. This includes their community radio show: How to care for ourselves in our own homes. A board member reported:

We can recognize and use medicinal plants. Health care is poor in El Salvador and hospitals are very bad. There's a hospital in Chalatenango. Patients have to bring their own syringe and antiseptics because the hospital does not have them. We have a lot of experienced health workers because of the war. We want to build a small clinic here with independent doctors.<sup>12</sup>

In the same region, people from San José Las Flores returned to their bombed village in 1986. Nowadays, they own 200 cattle, which are raised collectively. They have rebuilt all the buildings in the village and planted thousands of trees on the steep hillsides to reforest the area. Women run several co-ops: poultry, dairy, weaving, sewing, a bakery, a pharmacy, a restaurant, and a store. Also, the community has organized blockades to obstruct a Canadian mining company that has a concession from the Salvadoran government to explore mining operations in the area.

South of San Salvador, La Libertad is a Department of displaced people. A community of 26 families—140 people, 70 percent of them under age 18—live at *Comunidad de Permacultura La Florida*, near Santa Tecla, on land acquired through the PTT. They have a well, a maize mill, and a small clinic. Permaculture gardening was introduced under the auspices of the Christian Base Communities network (CEBES).

People grow vegetables; they cultivate bananas, avocados, jackfruit, papayas, and some coffee. Cruz Rivas de Valladares and her family live here.

We came here in 1986. We came with our bare hands, no belongings, nothing. We slept on the floor. There were rats. It was very difficult. When we came here this land was empty. Now we plant and harvest here. We've built our lives here. We grow maize, tomatoes, and beans. We have a little shop... very small income. I worked as a domestic worker for a year in the city. I came home when I had a day off. It's a better way of life these days, peaceful, but economically it's hard.<sup>13</sup>

The emphasis in these examples is on developing sustainable communities to provide everyday safety and security for all residents, autonomy over economic decisions, and meaningful opportunities for young people. These are far wider goals than those of income-generating projects. Marta Benavides, minister and community organizer, commented:

People drawn to income-generation projects are go-getters, focused on individual benefits rather than contributing to something bigger that can benefit the wider community. Those projects don't last long without a sustainable community as a base.<sup>14</sup>

### *Women's Organizing*

As these examples show, women are leaders in local municipalities, community organizations, co-ops, and NGOs. Women are involved in projects that focus on arts and culture like the School of Art in Perquín, mentioned above. Other examples include the Ecological House, a community resource in Nahuizalco (Sonsonate), an area with a high proportion of indigenous people, and the Center for Education for a Culture of Peace and Folk Art Museum (Santa Ana), a free museum open to the public, focusing on visions of an ecologically-sound society, what Marta Benavides calls “the work of the 23<sup>rd</sup> century”.<sup>15</sup>

In the late 1980s and early 90s a range of women's organizations formed in response to the impacts of both the war and the 1986 earthquake on women's lives and responsibilities. Some, like *La Asociación de Mujeres por la Dignidad y la Vida* (Women for Dignity and Life) and *El Instituto de Investigación, Capacitación y Desarrollo de la Mujer* (IMU) were explicitly feminist, and gave voice to women's subordination as *women*, not only as members of exploited classes (Stephen 1997). Such organizations sought to address the gaps and limitations in the post-war reintegration and reconstruction process. They sponsored women's self-development, including education, skills exchanges, a radio network, childcare projects, clinics, a bakery, job-related training for women, and small loans programs.<sup>16</sup> Also, they provided training opportunities that prepared women to move into local and national leadership roles.

Labor unions have organized women's committees also, although some feminists have chosen to organize outside unions, as their perspectives do not fit with a class analysis that excludes gender (Mendez 2002). With the expansion of the *maquila* industry in the 1990s, women started organizing to improve the lives and working conditions of garment assembly workers. Constrained by global economic realities, they are circumspect in their demands of both government and factory owners, for fear of losing jobs that Salvadoran women need.

### **Beyond the Peace Accords**

The Peace Accords provided a crucial starting point for demilitarization and the cease-fire agreement has held. Despite delays, the government reduced the military and reorganized the police force; the FMLN has reconstituted itself as a political party.

Nearly twenty years later, however, El Salvador is still deeply affected by the war, with ample evidence of the nation's legacy of authoritarian rule and corruption in the judiciary and the police force (Cañas and Dada 1999; Popkin 2000; Thompson 1998; Wood 2005).

### *Demilitarization and Everyday Security*

Physical security is still a fundamental issue for many people. The continued availability of small arms has fueled postwar crime rates, including armed robberies, kidnappings, and murders. Bars on windows and doors are commonplace; many people are reluctant to walk in the street after dark. Armed security men guard shopping malls, drug stores, and ice-cream parlors. In 1995, the office of the Attorney General reported more homicides a day than during the war (Conaway and Martínez 2004, 18), and the homicide rate—one of the highest in the world—has continued to rise (DeCesare 2009).

### *Democratization, Civil and Political Rights*

At national level the FMLN has gained ground in elections as the second major political party, and controls many small municipalities. The ARENA party held onto the Presidency for twenty years from 1989 to 2009, when FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes was elected with 51% of the vote, promising to address social and economic equalities. However, ARENA still retains control of the Legislative Assembly through alliances with smaller parties. International election monitors have reported many “irregularities” in national elections. In addition, Bush administration officials gave explicit warning in 2004 that a FMLN victory could jeopardize Temporary Protected Status for Salvadoran workers in the United States (Rubin 2004).<sup>17</sup> Also in 2009, ARENA campaign ads included this threat but FMLN supporters and Salvadoran migrants in the U.S. organized

to counter it (Gonzalez 2009).

The ARENA government had pushed through controversial legislation like the amnesty law, and the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) (Stop CAFTA Coalition 2006, 8). The National Assembly passed the Special Law Against Acts of Terrorism and Organized Crime in 2006, modeled on the USA PATRIOT Act. Ostensibly introduced to control gang violence, this seemed unlikely, as there was no program to protect witnesses. This law provided for prison terms of up to 60 years and has been applied to gang members, street vendors, and protestors. In 2007, for example, police used nightsticks, tear gas, and rubber bullets against demonstrators protesting the privatization of water distribution, and accused them of “acts of terrorism” (Carpenter 2007; Damon 2007; Gutiérrez 2007b). Funes has vowed to introduce economic policies that address root causes of poverty as well as rehabilitation plans to reduce youth involvement in street gangs and crimes of violence (DeCesare 2009).

### *Economic Reconstruction*

Economic reconstruction has been slow and uneven with little improvement in the nation’s persistent inequality. In 2006, 31 percent of the population lived below the national poverty line, with higher levels in rural areas (*CIA World Fact Book* 2008). El Salvador took the dollar as its currency in 2001 so it no longer controls its monetary policy, and CAFTA will open up the country to further exploitation by U.S.-based companies. The “war of bullets” may be over but a prolonged economic war continues.

An estimated 2.5 million Salvadorans live abroad, primarily in the United States. They send monthly remittances (*remesas*) to relatives back home, estimated at \$3.8

billion in 2008, though these have dropped by some 10% in 2009 as a result of the global recession and U.S. job losses.<sup>18</sup> A third of the rural population relies on these payments—\$140 per month on average—which make up 67 percent of El Salvador’s foreign exchange, compared to the *maquila* sector (16 percent) and agro-exports (6 percent) (Rosa 2004). For those who receive them, these funds represent 40-60 percent of household income (Kandel et al. 2006, 98). Some families are able to use remittances to make home improvements, invest in small farming or business projects, and to help their children stay in school (IFAD 2006; Sanchez 2006). More often, they are spent on fast food, powdered coffee, diapers, over-the-counter medications, and other consumer items. The dozen or so wealthy families who dominated plantation-style coffee and sugar production in the past, once the nation’s main income earners, have diversified their investments and now also own shopping malls. Companies like Coca Cola, Pizza Hut, Subway, McDonalds, KFC, Wendy’s, and Mister Donut are flourishing in El Salvador. They siphon the remittances back to the United States.

Researchers point to internal and external difficulties facing community reconstruction efforts as time goes by. Irina Silber (2004) emphasized some women’s disengagement from community organizing in Chalatenango, citing individual exhaustion and disillusionment, growing inequalities among people, and many failed projects that all attest to the difficulties of creating change. Vincent McElhinney (2004) noted growing bitterness among residents of Ciudad Segundo Montes, a community built with high hopes for economic justice that faces a “diminishing capacity to meet the needs of all its residents” (p. 161).

High expectations for equality and justice compounded by inexperience and individual shortcomings are partly responsible. In addition, political and economic policies of the ARENA government and global economic trends have undermined and vitiated community efforts. In March 2009, Salvadorans voted in large numbers for social and economic change. The election of President Funes is a significant step in this direction, though his decisions will be constrained by the ARENA-dominated National Assembly and the mandates of neoliberal economics. There is also the possibility of making new alliances with left-leaning Latin American governments, which may lead to fruitful partnerships in regional trade, energy, and healthcare (Burrige 2009).

It will require enormous systemic change, including a greater concern for women's rights, to create sustainable livelihoods, greater economic equality, adequate community services, and environmental security: that is, to actualize the promise of the Peace Accords and end the war.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cruz Rivas de Valladares, la Florida (La Libertad), march 19, 2007. Interpreter: Juan Rojas.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.wallsofhope.org>

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved September 24, 2007 from [http://www.sancarlosfoundation.org/index.asp?Type=B\\_EV&SEC=%7BF84650A5-8B15-4013-B95D-8387E27E1DF3%7D](http://www.sancarlosfoundation.org/index.asp?Type=B_EV&SEC=%7BF84650A5-8B15-4013-B95D-8387E27E1DF3%7D)

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.capacitar.org/commun/stories/elsalvador.html>

<sup>5</sup> See [http://www.speaktruth.org/defend/profiles/profile\\_31.asp](http://www.speaktruth.org/defend/profiles/profile_31.asp)

<sup>6</sup> A volunteer organization, the Alliance of Forensic Scientists for Human Rights and Humanitarian Investigations, created a DNA database with over 800 DNA samples from

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family members in El Salvador who are searching for missing children. See <http://www.hrcberkeley.org/specialprojects/DNAReunification/>

<sup>7</sup> Jesse Dyer Stewart, US-El Salvador Sister Cities Co-coordinator, personal communication, March 19, 2007. Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> See US-El Salvador Sister Cities Program [http://elsalvadorsolidarity.org/joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=37&Itemid=45](http://elsalvadorsolidarity.org/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=37&Itemid=45).

<sup>9</sup> Rosa Cándida, Las Vueltas, March 19, 2007. Interpreter: Jesse Dyer Stewart.

<sup>10</sup> Now known as the Chalatenango Coordinating Committee for Development.

<sup>11</sup> María Esperanza Ortega, Chalatenango, March 19, 2007. Interpreter: Jesse Dyer Stewart. During the war Esperanza Ortega organized 200 civilians on the run from government troops. She lost three of her eight children: “Two died as combatants and one girl died of hunger” (1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005, 126).

<sup>12</sup> Comments made by a CCR board member, Chalatenango, March 19, 2007. Interpreter: Jesse Dyer Stewart.

<sup>13</sup> Cruz Rivas de Valladares, La Florida (La Libertad), March 17, 2007. Interpreter: Juan Rojas.

<sup>14</sup> Marta Benavides, Caracas (Venezuela), January 26, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Marta Benavides, Santa Ana (El Salvador), March 23, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> See *Welcome to WINDS*. 1991. Circulated by the Women’s International Network for Development and Democracy in El Salvador: Washington, D.C.

<sup>17</sup> Strong ties with the United States enabled the Salvadoran government to negotiate Temporary Protected Status for some overseas workers in the U.S. after a devastating earthquake wiped out homes, farms, and jobs in El Salvador in 2001.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2033.htm#econ>

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